DR. STRANGE
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DOCTOR STRANGE™
MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS
A MIND GONE MAD!
CAN EVEN THE SORCERER SUPREME DEFEAT SPECTERS FROM HIS OWN GRIM PAST?
SHADOWPLAY!

Once he was a man like most *others* — a *worldly* man, seduced and jaded by *material* things. But then he discovered the *separate* reality, where *sorcery* and *men's souls* shaped the forces that shape our *lives*. In that instant, he was *born again*, to become a man like *no* other—a man who left us *behind*, as he strove to stand against the unseen subtle perils hovering *thick* and *black* around our fragile existence...

Stan Lee PRESENTS: Dr. STRANGE MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS!™

SHADOWPLAY!

THE ENIGMATIC ETERNITY SPOKE TO WARN ME THAT TIME HAD RUN OUT FOR HUMANITY--AND I VOWED TO FIGHT HIM, TO PROVE IT MUST NOT BE SO!
HIS ANSWER WAS TO PLACE ME HERE, IN THIS SWIRL OF SHIFTING SHADOWS--
--AND NOW, OUR MYSTIC BATTLE IS BEGUN!
A JOURNEY TO YOUR INNER REALM WITH
STEVE ENGLEHART AUTHOR
GENE COLAN ARTIST
TOM PALMER INKS, COLOR
JOHN COSTANZA LETTERS
MARV WOLFMAN EDITOR

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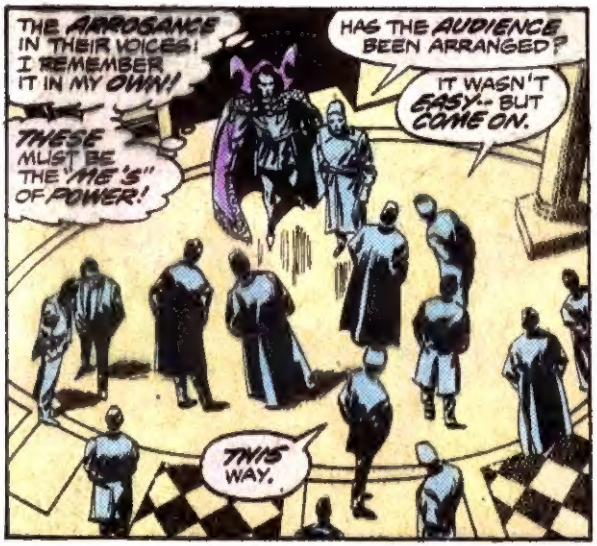
RETURN TO YOUR AMULET, O' EYE OF AGAMOTTO!
I CAN SEE NOTHING...
...FOR PERHAPS THERE IS NOTHING TO SEE!
PERHAPS THIS IS THE FUTURE OF WHICH ETERNITY SPOKE: THE WORLD AT ITS END!
HOW IS IT YOU WOULD OVERCOME ME, WHEN YOU CANNOT OVERCOME YOURSELVES?
--AND THE BRILLIANT OCCULT ADEPT, AND THE MAN OF MYSTERY!
I DO NOT UNDERSTAND!
--THE SUCCESSFUL MAN OF POWER, AND THE DISCARDED DRUNKEN DERELICT--
WHICH OF THESE IS--
DR. STRANGE?
YOU SAY YOU STAND FOR HUMANITY! I SHALL TAKE YOU AT YOUR WORD--
--FOR YOU MOST CLEARLY ENCOMPASS ALL THE DANGERS THAT DRIVE YOUR WORLD TOWARD DISASTER!
IN YOUR TIME, YOU HAVE BEEN--
THAT MAN--APPEARING FROM THE FOG WHEN I THOUGHT MYSELF ALONE--!

BY THE HOARY HOSTS OF HOGGOTH! HE HAS MY FACE--
--AND HE'S DRESSED IN A SURGEON'S SMOCK, SUCH AS I WORE WHEN I WAS ONLY A MEDICAL DOCTOR!
IF YOU'RE THE CHARLATAN, MACK, I'VE GOT AN INVITATION FOR YOU.
YOUR PRESENCE IS REQUESTED-- AND THE DANCE HAS ALREADY BEGUN!
Invitation to the Dance of The Red Death
House
Mirrors
RSVP
WELL?
THIS IS OBVIOUSLY ETERNITY'S OPENING MOVE-- IN WHICH CASE, THERE'S NOTHING TO BE GAINED FROM AVOIDING IT!
LEAD ON, SURGEON!
AS YOU WISH.
THE SOLITARY FIGURE TURNS, AND STEPS INTO THE ENVELOPING MIST.
THE MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS MUST FOLLOW SWIFTLY, OR RISK LOSING HIS DOUBLE. THEIR FOOTSTEPS ARE MUFFLED ON THE UNSEEN EARTH, AND THE CLAMMY WAVES SWIRL SOMBERLY WITH THEIR PASSING...
...UNTIL, ALL AT ONCE--
A MANSION-- AN ESTATE! NOW I HEAR THE MURMUR OF CONVERSATION, THE CLINK AND CLATTER OF GLASSWARE!
IT SEEMS A CELEBRATION-- BUT I SEE NO WOMEN! CAN IT BE--?

YES! EVERYONE HERE LOOKS LIKE ME--
--THOUGH NOT EVERYONE IS A DOCTOR! THERE ARE SOLDIERS-- PRIESTS--
LOOK AT THOSE CLOTHES, STEVE-- AND THAT CRAZY COLLAR!
--AND MANY IN EVERYDAY BUSINESS SUITS!
LOOKS LIKE WE'VE GOT A LIVE ONE, STEVE!

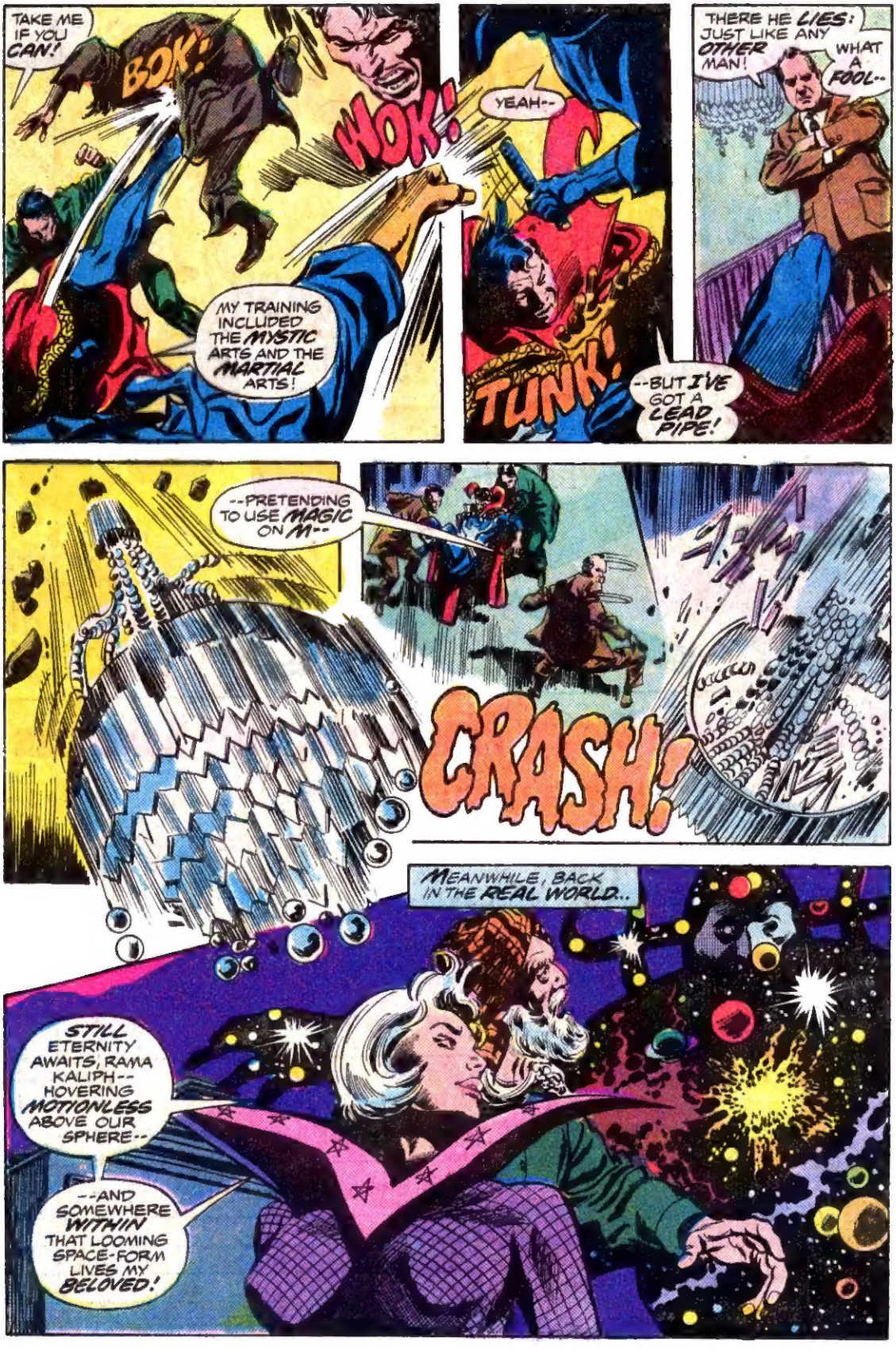

THE ARROGANCE IN THEIR VOICES! I REMEMBER IT IN MY OWN!
HAS THE AUDIENCE BEEN ARRANGED?
IT WASN'T EASY-- BUT COME ON.
THESE MUST BE THE "ME'S" OF POWER!
THIS WAY.

HERE HE IS, MASTER-- JUST AS YOU ORDERED.
AHA! THEIR LEADER DOESN'T RESEMBLE ME--!
NO, WAIT! THAT'S NOT HIS REAL FACE!

HE'S WEARING A MASK-- A MASK OF RICHARD NIXON'S FACE!
BUT THE REAL NIXON RESIGNED FROM POWER MONTHS AGO--!
MAGICIAN, YOU'RE DISRUPTING OUR SOCIETY! THERE ARE TOO MANY PEOPLE BEGINNING TO THINK LIKE YOU!
WHAT CAN THIS MEAN?

SOCIETY NEEDS ORDER! TELL 'M, CHIEF!

THE PEOPLE HAVE BEEN UPSET, BUT THEY ARE COMING BACK TO NORMAL--OR THEY WOULD BE, IF PEOPLE LIKE YOU WEREN'T AROUND!
WE PUT UP WITH THEIR UPSET ONCE, BUT IT CAN'T CONTINUE! WE HAVE TOO MANY PLANS--TO MANY IRONS IN THE FIRE!
TONIGHT AT MIDNIGHT, THE RED DEATH IS COMING--AT MY COMMAND!
I CONTROL HIM JUST LIKE I CONTROL EVERYTHING ELSE IN MY REALM, NOW AND FOREVER--
--BUT THE PEOPLE WOULD BE AFRAID!
THEREFORE, ALL RABBLE-ROUSERS MUST BE PLACED UNDER ARREST!
TO YOUR WAY OF THINKING, PERHAPS--BUT FORTUNATELY, WHATEVER MUNDANE POWER YOU WIELD IS AS NOTHING COMPARED TO MINE!
I'VE LISTENED TO YOUR RAVINGS GRACIOUSLY, BUT NOW--!
BY CANDLE-DARK--AND STARRY DAY--OUT FROM THIS PLACE I WOULD AWAY!
WHAT--?!!
NOTHING HAPPENED!
THAT'S YOUR TOUGH LUCK, CRACKPOT!
HA HA
TAKE HIM, BOYS!


TAKE ME IF YOU CAN!
BOK!
WOK!
MY TRAINING INCLUDED THE MYSTIC ARTS AND THE MARTIAL ARTS!
YEAH--
TUNK!
--BUT I'VE GOT A LEAD PIPE!
THERE HE LIES! JUST LIKE ANY OTHER MAN!
WHAT A FOOL--
--PRETENDING TO USE MAGIC ON M--
CRASH!
MEANWHILE, BACK IN THE REAL WORLD...
STILL ETERNITY AWAITS, RAMA KALIPH-- HOVERING MOTIONLESS ABOVE OUR SPHERE--
--AND SOMEWHERE WITHIN THAT LOOMING SPACE-FORM LIVES MY BELOVED!

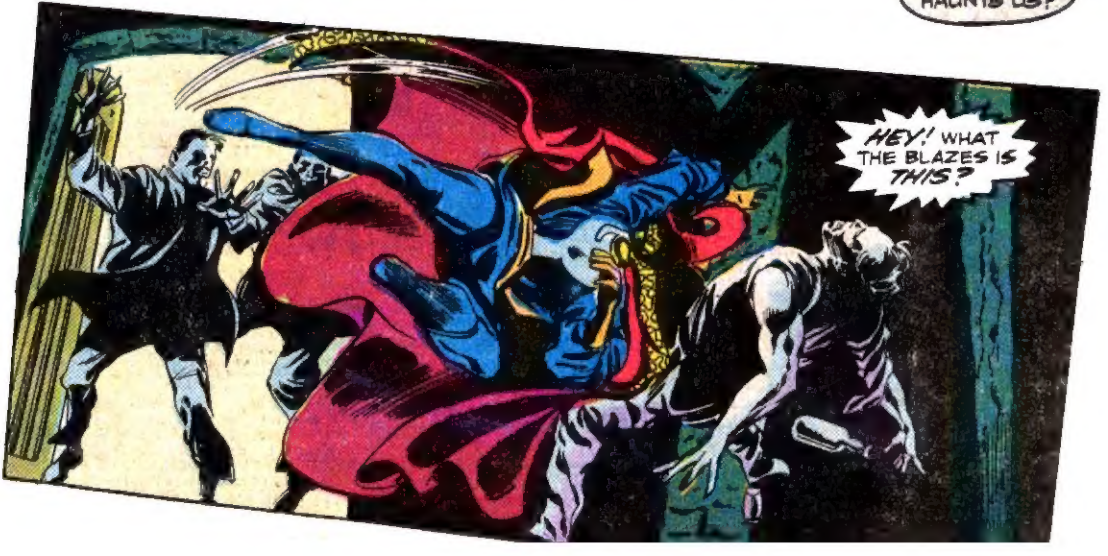
I ONLY TELL YOU THIS IN THE HOPE THAT YOU, AS AN ACCOMPLISHED ADEPT, MAY BE OF SOME HELP IN OUR HOUR OF PERIL!
ALAS, DISCIPLE TO MY FRIEND, I AM POWERLESS. ONLY DR. STRANGE, OF ALL WHO LIVE, HAS UNLOCKED THE RIDDLE OF ETERNITY!

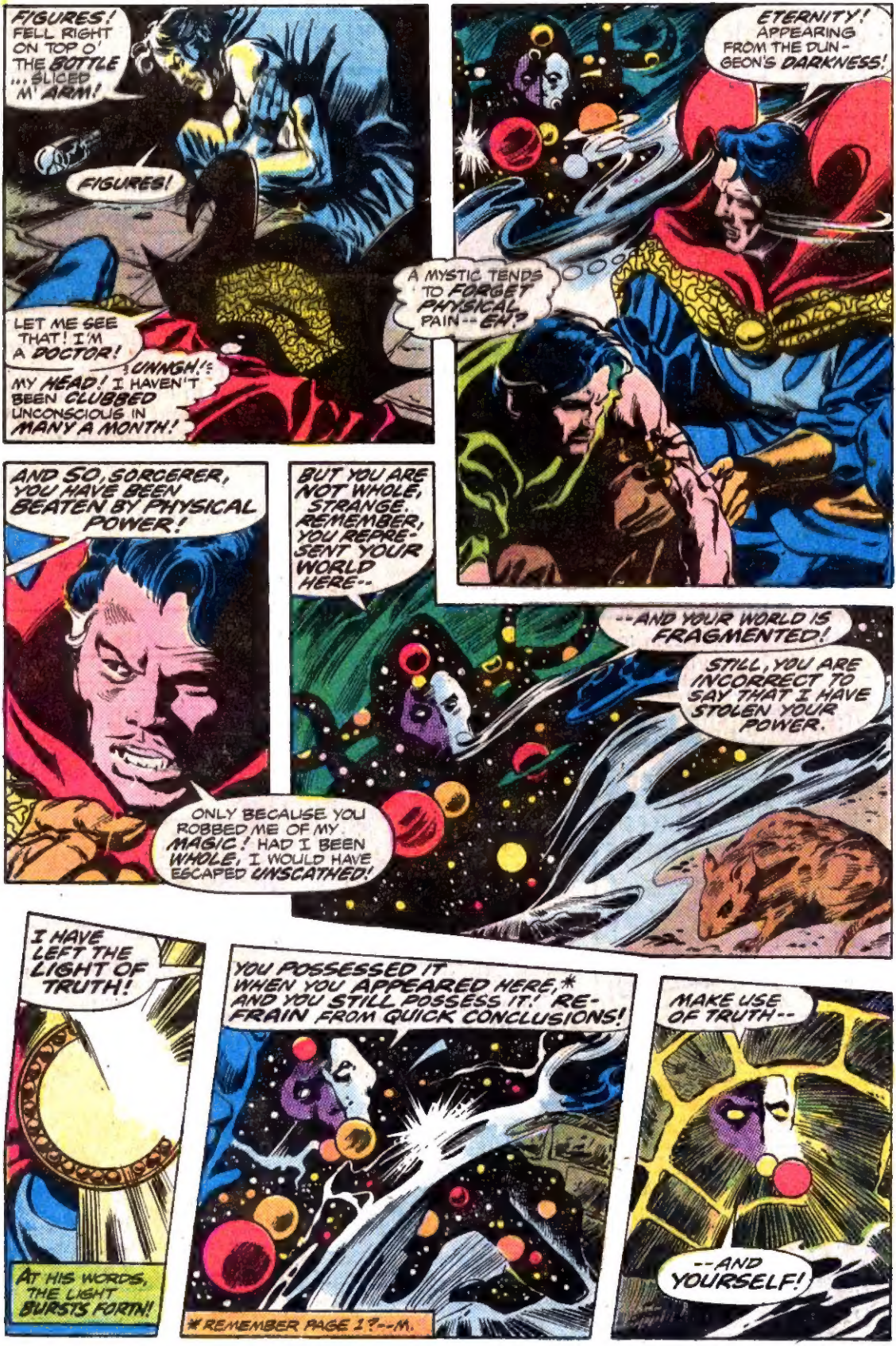
IS THAT THE REASON HE REFUSED TO ACCEPT MY AID? *
OR IS IT MORE? I ABANDONED MY REALM... MY FATHER... FOR THE LOVE OF STEPHEN STRANGE, AND I'VE TAKEN A GREAT DEAL FOR GRANTED...
NO... THAT IS NONSENSE!
* LAST ISSUE.--M.

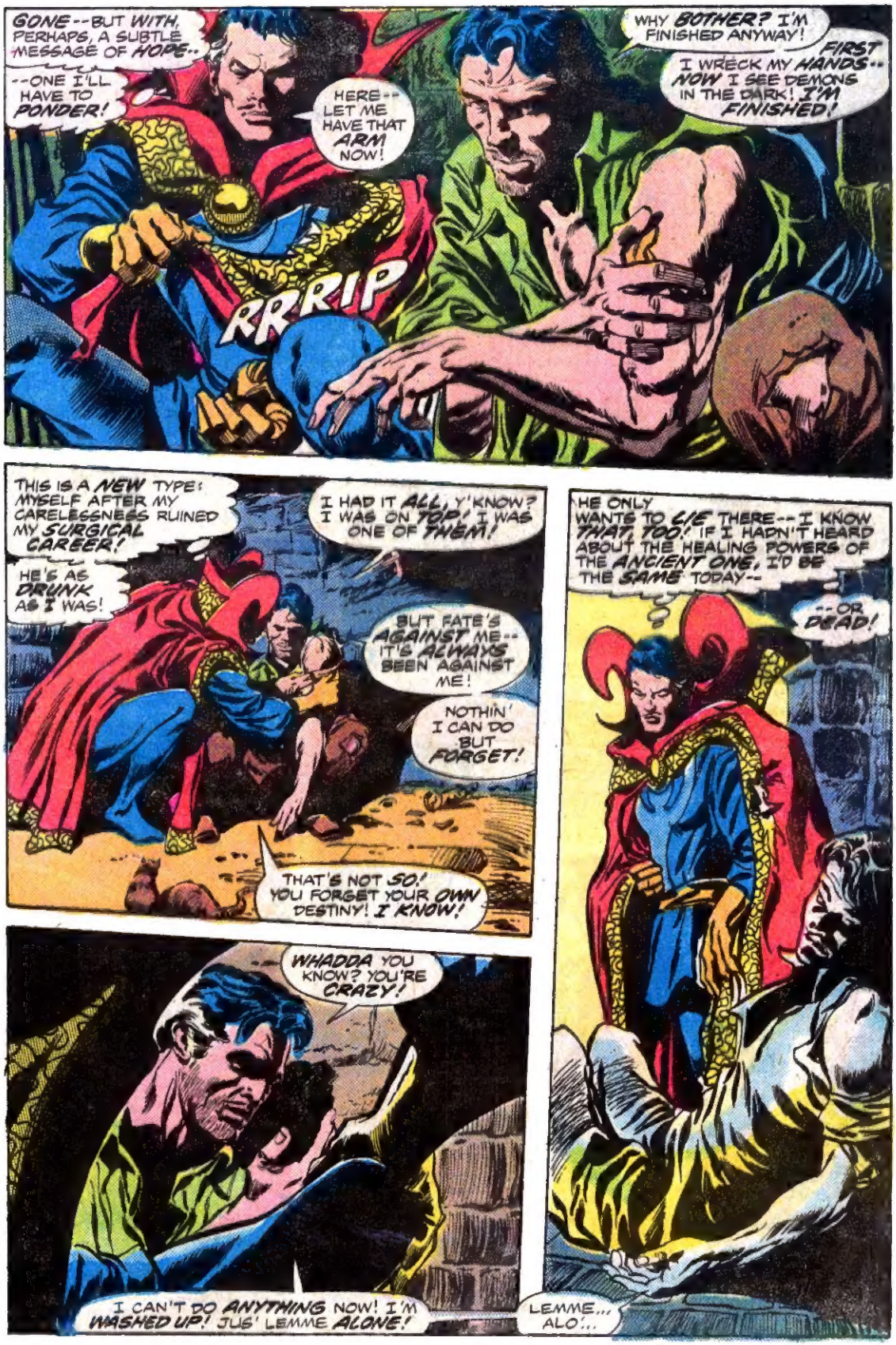
HE LOVES ME!
MISS CLEA! COME QUICKLY!
BARON MORDO HAS ESCAPED!

THAT CANNOT BE, LORD PHYFFE!
STEPHEN HIMSELF CAST THE SPELL WHICH HELD HIM--!

BUT IT IS TRUE! THE ROOM IS EMPTY!
WHAT NEW MENACE NOW HAUNTS US?


HEY! WHAT THE BLAZES IS THIS?


FIGURES! FELL RIGHT ON TOP O' THE BOTTLE ... SLICED M' ARM!
FIGURES!
LET ME SEE THAT! I'M A DOCTOR!
UNNGH!
MY HEAD! I HAVEN'T BEEN CLUBBED UNCONSCIOUS IN MANY A MONTH!
ETERNITY! APPEARING FROM THE DUNGEON'S DARKNESS!
A MYSTIC TENDS TO FORGET PHYSICAL PAIN -- EH?
AND SO, SORCERER, YOU HAVE BEEN BEATEN BY PHYSICAL POWER!
ONLY BECAUSE YOU ROBBED ME OF MY MAGIC! HAD I BEEN WHOLE, I WOULD HAVE ESCAPED UNSCATHED!
BUT YOU ARE NOT WHOLE, STRANGE. REMEMBER, YOU REPRESENT YOUR WORLD HERE--
--AND YOUR WORLD IS FRAGMENTED!
STILL, YOU ARE INCORRECT TO SAY THAT I HAVE STOLEN YOUR POWER.
I HAVE LEFT THE LIGHT OF TRUTH!
AT HIS WORDS, THE LIGHT BURSTS FORTH!
YOU POSSESSED IT WHEN YOU APPEARED HERE,* AND YOU STILL POSSESS IT! REFRAIN FROM QUICK CONCLUSIONS!
* REMEMBER PAGE 1?--M.
MAKE USE OF TRUTH--
--AND YOURSELF!


GONE--BUT WITH, PERHAPS, A SUBTLE MESSAGE OF HOPE..
--ONE I'LL HAVE TO PONDER!
HERE--LET ME HAVE THAT ARM NOW!
RRRIP
WHY BOTHER? I'M FINISHED ANYWAY!
I WRECK MY HANDS-- FIRST NOW I SEE DEMONS IN THE DARK! I'M FINISHED!
THIS IS A NEW TYPE: MYSELF AFTER MY CARELESSNESS RUINED MY SURGICAL CAREER!
HE'S AS DRUNK AS I WAS!
I HAD IT ALL, Y'KNOW? I WAS ON TOP! I WAS ONE OF THEM!
BUT FATE'S AGAINST ME-- IT'S ALWAYS BEEN AGAINST ME!
NOTHIN' I CAN DO BUT FORGET!
THAT'S NOT SO! YOU FORGET YOUR OWN DESTINY! I KNOW!
HE ONLY WANTS TO LIE THERE--I KNOW THAT, TOO! IF I HADN'T HEARD ABOUT THE HEALING POWERS OF THE ANCIENT ONE, I'D BE THE SAME TODAY--
--OR DEAD!
WHADDA YOU KNOW? YOU'RE CRAZY!
I CAN'T DO ANYTHING NOW! I'M WASHED UP! JUS' LEMME ALONE!
LEMME... ALO'...

BUT HE'S NOT MY ENEMY. HIS OPPOSITE NUMBERS ARE--AND I'M AS HELPLESS BEFORE THEM NOW AS HE IS!
WHAT WAS I SAYING EARLIER*--ABOUT HAVING OPENED TOO MANY DOORWAYS BETWEEN MY WORLD AND THE BEYOND? IT'S LIKE A NIGHTMARE--
* LAST ISSUE.--M.
BY THE OMNISCIENCE OF THE ALL-MIND!
NIGHTMARE!
I MET MY ANCIENT FOE IN BARON MORDO'S DELIRIUM!* WHAT IF ALL THIS IS ACTUALLY SOME TRICK OF HIS?!!
* ALSO LAST ISSUE.--MARV.
IN THAT, THE LIGHT OF TRUTH WILL BE OF HELP!
I'LL TURN IT UPON MYSELF--!
BUT THE MYSTIC MASTER'S NEWBORN HOPES ARE QUICKLY CRUSHED.
THE AMULET SHOWS MY MIND TO BE CLEAR, AWAKE, AND AWARE! THIS IS REALITY--SUCH AS IT IS!
BUT WHAT, THEN, AM I TO DO? I CANNOT EVEN CALL UPON PRIMITIVE RITUALS, AS I DID AGAINST UMAR--*
*ISH #8--M.
--BECAUSE MOTHER NATURE HOLDS NO SWAY HE--
BY THE GODS! THAT STONE I WAS LEANING AGAINST--!

GET AWAY FROM THERE!
THAT'S THE ESCAPE HOLE I'M DIGGING!
ESCAPE HOLE? THEN THERE IS A WAY OUT!
HURRY! LET'S GET TO WORK!
I'LL HELP YOU DIG!
YOU'LL-- HELP ME?
NO...
YOU'LL ONLY MESS IT ALL UP SOMEHOW! I KNOW WHAT THE WORLD IS LIKE!
I HAVE TO STOP YOU! YOU HAVE TO DIE!
INTERLUDE: INVISIBLE TO THE EYES OF MAN, THE ASTRAL FORM OF BARON MORDO FLITS TO-AND-FRO ABOVE THE MONOLITHS OF DARK MANHATTAN.
HE IS LIKE UNTO A MOTH, SOARING HE KNOWS NOT WHERE NOR WHY...
...FOR SUCH LOGIC HAS LONG BEEN LOST TO HIM, ON THE WIDE ROLLING SEA OF MINDLESS MADNESS!
HE COULD NOT SAY HOW HE ESCAPED DR. STRANGE'S SANCTUM--

--NOR DOES HE CARE! ALL HE KNOWS IS THE CALL OF THE MOON, AND THE WHISTLE WITHIN THE WIND.
BUT WAIT!
NOW HE SENSES A KINDRED MADNESS--
--A SEEMING ECHO TO THE DISSONANCE WITHIN HIMSELF.
HE FEELS NO DESIRE FOR IT--HE IS NOT THAT COMPOSED.
--BUT HE TURNS AND SOARS TOWARD IT.
WHY, YOU'VE GONE A LONG WAY! WE CAN FINISH THIS IN NO TIME!
WHY NOT?
SECOND INTERLUDE:
WHATEVER THE DANGER HE FACES, I MUST BE AT MY BELOVED'S SIDE.
THAT IS THE WAY OF IT.
HIS SOUL IS KNOWN TO ME--
--SO I SHALL SEEK IT, IN WHATEVER REALM IT--
--IT--
NO!
STEPHEN!!

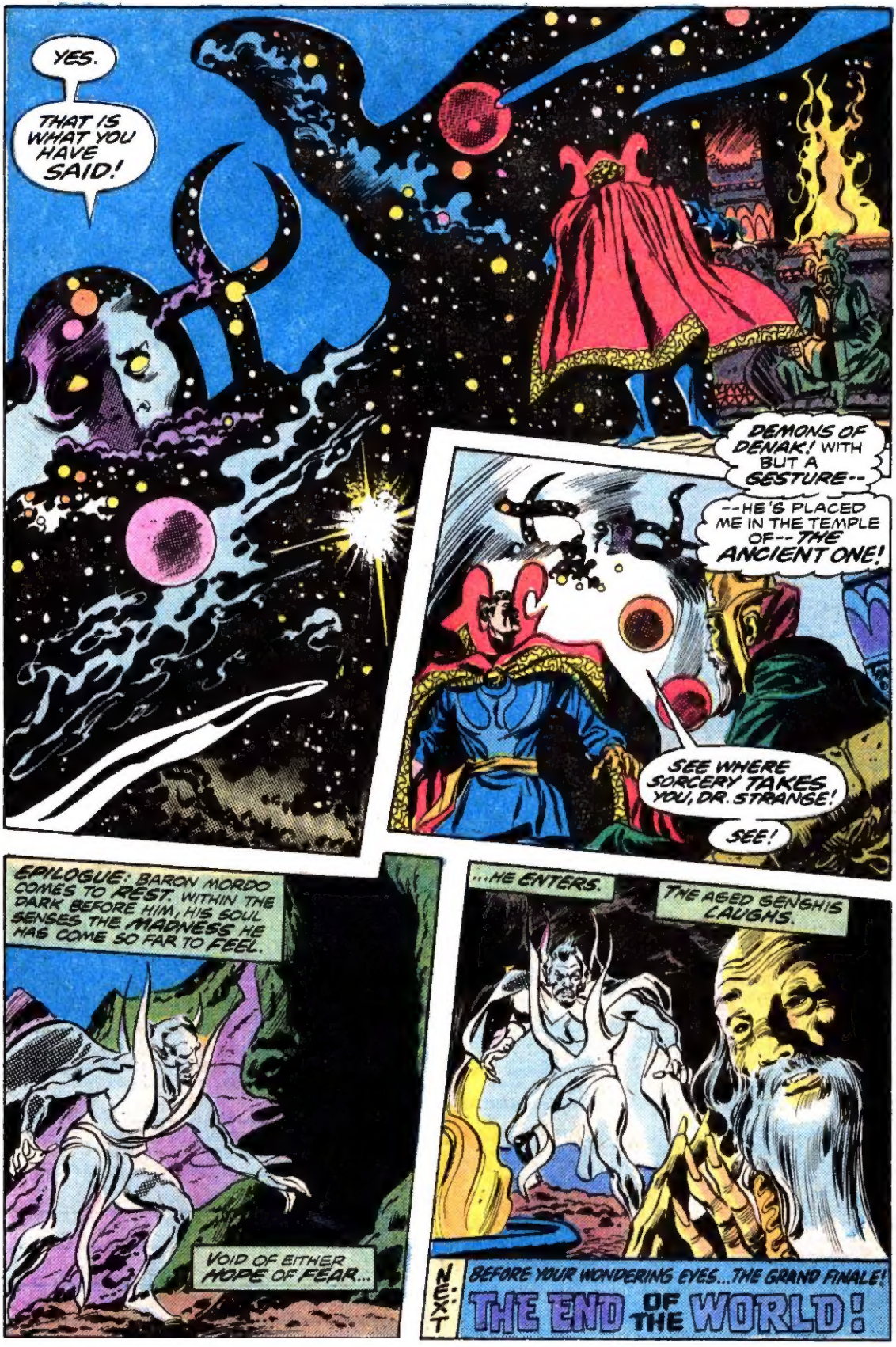
BY ALL THE GODS!!
CLANG
SOMETHING CAUSED ME TO GLANCE UP AT THE LAST SECOND! WHATEVER IT WAS, BLESSED BE!
YOU DRUNKEN FOOL!
PUNK!
YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN YOURSELF OR ANYONE ELSE NOW, DO YOU?
WELL, WHAT ABOUT YOU?
IF YOU TRUSTED ME, YOU'D NEVER HAVE TURNED YOUR HEAD!
DON'T PREACH TO ME, MAGICIAN! YOU'RE NO BETTER THAN THE REST OF US!
TWO HOURS LATER, A MUD-DABBLED FORM STUMBLES UP FROM THE EARTH...
...TO STALK THE GROUNDS OF A FAMILIAR, FOG-DRAPED ESTATE!
THERE! ONE OF THE GUESTS, BY HIMSELF!
NOT UNLIKE A NIGHT-GAUNT GHOUL, HE SLIPS FROM DARK CONCEALMENT...
...AND SILENTLY ATTACKS!
BUT HIS GOAL IS NOT BLOOD, OR FLESH! RATHER, IT'S...

--CLOTHES!
THAT STEPHEN STRANGE WILL SLEEP FOR HOURS, AND IN THE MEANTIME--
--I'LL BE HE!
THE PRISONER WAS WRONG! I'M NOT LIKE EVERYONE ELSE--NOT IN MY HEAD--
--BUT I APPEAR THE SAME, AND THAT'S MY SOLE ADVANTAGE--
--IN ATTEMPTING TO STOP THE MIDNIGHT RENDEZVOUS WITH DEATH!
THERE STANDS THE RULER, STILL WEARING HIS MASK!
I'LL HAVE TO LURE HIM AWAY FROM THE GENERALS-- GET HIM OUTSIDE!
GODS! IF I ONLY HAD MY MAGIC!
EXCUSE ME, MASTER...
YES? WHAT IS IT? I'M VERY BUSY!
A PERSONAL MATTER, SIR...
I WOULDN'T WANT TO MENTION ANY NAMES IN PUBLIC, BUT IF YOU'LL COME--
STOP!
IT'S THE PRISONER, MASTER. HE BEGGED TO SEE YOU.
THAT MAN'S THE ENEMY! DON'T GO WITH HIM!
I'M ON YOUR SIDE, SIR! I'M LOYAL!

LISTEN TO ME-- ALL OF YOU! I'M NOT YOUR ENEMY! THE RED DEATH IS YOUR ENEMY-- AND THE MAN WHO CALLS HIM!
THEY'RE THE ONE'S YOU MUST STOP-- BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
BUT NO ONE MOVES!
YOU'RE THE CHARLATAN!
MY GOD, WON'T YOU EVER GET WISE?
YOU CAN'T CHANGE ANYTHING HERE! THIS IS MY DOMAIN! I HAVE BOTH TIME AND LUCK ON MY SIDE--
--ANY ANY MOMENT NOW, THE RED DEATH HIMSELF--
YESSSS?
POE DESCRIBED HIM, "...TALL, AND GAUNT, AND SHROUDED FROM HEAD TO FOOT IN THE HABILIMENTS OF THE GRAVE. THE MASK ...THE COUNTENANCE OF A STIFFENED CORPSE... DABBLED IN BLOOD!"
THE YEARS HAVE WROUGHT NO CHANGE.
HE GLIDES UNCHALLENGED THROUGH THE ASSEMBLED THRONG.
EXACTLY MID-NIGHT! YOU'RE PROMPT, DEATH!
I SEE YOU RECOGNIZE WHO'S MASTER IN THIS LAND--
--THAT I, AND I ALONE, HAVE DONE WHAT NO OTHER MAN EVER HAS!

IN ANSWER...
...A CRIMSON HAND IS LANGUIDLY LIFTED...
...AND MEN FALL...
THIS MADNESS HAS GONE FAR ENOUGH!
NO MAN CONTROLS DEATH, NO MATTER WHAT EARTHLY POWER HE HOLDS! NOT A SURGEON, NOT A PRIEST-- AND NOT A RULER!
DESPITE ALL MASKS OF OMNIPOTENCE--
--MEN ARE BUT MEN, AND NO MORE!
AS FOR YOU, DEATH--
--I WOULD SEE WHAT LURKS BENEATH YOUR GRIM FACADE!
BENEATH MY MASK, MYSTIC...
...LIES BUT ANOTHER MASK...
...THE MASK OF COMEDY!
WHEN LAST WE MET, I WORE THE MASK OF INFINITY! MEET ME AGAIN, AND I'LL WEAR ANOTHER!
DEATH IS A MASK, DR. STRANGE.
AU REVOIR.

AU REVOIR... DEATH.
MY MASK! WHERE'S MY MASK?
GONE, POWER-MONGER-- VANISHED IN THE LIGHT OF TRUTH!
BUT--WHAT ABOUT MY POSITION-- MY CONTROL?
WITHOUT MY MASK, I'LL BE JUST LIKE EVERYONE ELSE-- BUT I'M NOT!
DON'T YOU SEE? I'M BETTER THAN THEY ARE!
I DON'T LIKE PEOPLE! THAT'S WHY I HAD TO RULE THEM-- KEEP THEM IN THEIR PLACE!
...NO...
...YOU DON'T SEE...
BUT OF COURSE YOU DO, DOCTOR. THE REALITY OF PRIDE AND PARANOIA IS NOT DIFFICULT TO DEFINE.
EXACTLY! THIS WAS A GAME UNWORTHY OF YOU, ETERNITY!
EVERYTHING YOU WISHED TO TEACH ME, I ALREADY KNEW! I LEARNED IT YEARS AGO!
THAT'S THE REASON I DIVORCED MYSELF FROM SUCH NONSENSE, AND TURNED TO HIGHER PURSUITS!
AND YET, THOUGH YOU HAVE LEARNED, THE GAME GOES ON--REPEATED ENDLESSLY, YEAR AFTER YEAR, PLACE AFTER PLACE!
WHAT HAS YOUR PERSONAL IMPROVEMENT, OR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE FEW LIKE YOU, DONE TO CHANGE THAT?
I'VE LEARNED SORCERY! AS I TOLD THE RULER--
--MY POWER-- IF I HAD IT-- WOULD FAR OUTSTRIP HIS!
AND AS I'VE TOLD YOU FROM THE START, I COULD SAVE THE WORLD THROUGH SORCERY!


YES.
THAT IS WHAT YOU HAVE SAID!
DEMONS OF DENAK! WITH BUT A GESTURE--
--HE'S PLACED ME IN THE TEMPLE OF--THE ANCIENT ONE!
SEE WHERE SORCERY TAKES YOU, DR. STRANGE!
SEE!
EPILOGUE: BARON MORDO COMES TO REST. WITHIN THE DARK BEFORE HIM, HIS SOUL SENSES THE MADNESS HE HAS COME SO FAR TO FEEL.
VOID OF EITHER HOPE OF FEAR...
...HE ENTERS.
THE AGED GENGHIS LAUGHS.
NEXT
BEFORE YOUR WONDERING EYES...THE GRAND FINALE!
THE END OF THE WORLD!